

Leaders Report April 2016

The Boxing Day Floods

As we have a special meeting on the work of the Flood Commission, I will not cover this issue in my report this time, except to report that there was also a very full and productive meeting of the Flood Steering Group in early March which included ideas on how to strengthen the role of that group in the light of the substantial programme of recovery and defence work which is now required.

I was also pleased to meet the Chair of the Environment Agency on her visit to Mytholmroyd and Hebden Bridge, where she was able to hear at first hand about the impact of the floods and see some of the challenges we face.

Important Cabinet decisions

There are some significant items for Council approval at this meeting, so again there is no reason to include them in this report. But in addition to the specific resolutions on the Council agenda, other important decisions taken since the last Council meeting included:-

- The proposals relating to the future use and development of Halifax Town Hall;
- The agreement of a major programme of green and environmental actions, which I am sure my colleague Cllr Lynn will report on;
- The promotion of smokefree play areas, an important next step in our public health drive to reduce the prevalence of smoking;
- The approval of repairs to Calderdale Industrial Museum Building, enabling the community development programme to go ahead;
- Agreeing the Equality Annual Progress Report;
- Approving important partnership agreements with the NHS covering the Better Care Fund and the Calderdale Vanguard;
- Entered into agreements to release council-owned land for three affordable housing developments;
- Approved the memorandum of understanding relating to the Enterprise Zone covering the Clifton Employment Site; and
- Endorsed proposals for major investment in the replacement and improvement of the Council's street lighting across the Borough.

Proposals from scrutiny

Cabinet has also considered detailed reports from scrutiny panels. I would like to particularly commend the thoughtful work by Use of Resources scrutiny on attendance management, which make some sound and sensible proposals in stark contrast from the damaging politicking that has sometimes taken place around this issue.

Combined Authority meetings and devolution

It's unlikely that there will be further developments on the long-running devolution discussions for a while – certainly until after the EU referendum and no doubt the fall out from that has settled down.

West Yorkshire already has a very substantial 'growth deal' programme to deliver, including the major Transport Fund investments, and we should focus our efforts on ensuring that this work delivers all that has been promised, and more, for Calderdale.

The Chief Executive and I recently met with the newly-appointed Managing Director of the Combined Authority, and there are also regular meetings with the leaders of both the other political groups and key officers to share information and ensure we are taking a coordinated approach to our activities at West Yorkshire level.

Other meetings and events

We had a further and very positive meeting of the Business and Economy Sounding Team in March, which is becoming an important link between the Council and some of our key business partners.

I've held regular meetings with various local partners including Chief Superintendent Whitehead from West Yorkshire Police.

Held various discussions at WYCA regarding investment in the Calder Valley line, and continuing to press the case for Elland station.

It's been a pleasure also to attend the 'Our Stars' award event at the Victoria Theatre, hearing about the fantastic work of some of our staff, and also more recently take part in a long-service awards ceremony.

I've met with representatives from Halifax Choral Society who are making plans for their 200th anniversary in 2017, and enjoyed attending the AGM of Calderdale Industrial Museum Association.

Health and Inequalities Portfolio

I need to formally notify Council that Cllr Simon Young stood down from this role on the 1st April, following his appointment to a position with Calderdale CCG. I have covered these responsibilities since then, and the report submitted on this is a joint one. I'd like to thank Simon for this work, and in particular the development of the 20mph residential policies, the action on smoking prevention, and the developing Active Borough agenda.

Thank you

I'd like to thank the Council's senior management team, and indeed all our staff, for their work and support over the current year.